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The Age of Degradation lasted, roughly speaking, up to the period of the French Be volution. In England, Holland and America, there had been a very considerable measure of social emancipation even before this time; in Central and Eastern Europe notable relics of the old system continued long after. But in general it may be said that it was the French Revolution which broke down the gates of the Ghetto and permitted its downtrodden denizens to enjoy for the first time the same rights and opportunities as their neighbours.

The consequences of this were remarkable. A section of the European population, of at least normal intelligence, with their wits sharpened by generations of intensive Talmudical study, were suddenly allowed after centuries of repression to emerge into the world, and given for the first time their natural outlet. Once the outside pressure was removed, the inevitable happened. These Jews began to find their own level. The grandchildren of the petty Ghetto traders and usurers became leaders of business, of thought, of society. Those whose brains and intelligences qualified them rose in a remarkable manner in the circles to which they were at last admitted. It was, of course, no more than what might have been expected. The Jew of the Ghetto period was not a usurer, a petty trader, and so on by choice. His intellectual interests were at least as wide and as varied as that of the patrician or citizen in the outside world. It

was not therefore that his descendants rose above their level: it was that, after a lapse of centuries, they at last found their level.

In what direction could these newly-emerged scions of the Ghetto seek an outlet ? The centuries of repression could not fail to leave their trace; and it was impossible for those who during long generations had been